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ABSTRACT

A study was conducted to design a set of procedures for complying with the federal mandate for an employer followup of vocational education students. Procedures, designed on the basis of existing literature and federal guidelines, were pilot tested in two ways--one local-program based, the other local-program and state-agency based. The two methods of data collection were compared for rate of return reliability and cost effectiveness. Sample groups included local education agencies, vocational-technical schools, and postsecondary institutions with approved vocational education programs. A low participation rate by schools and a set of comments on the survey by participating and nonparticipating schools suggested that local vocational educators viewed the survey as an imposition not offset by achieved results. Fewer students were followed up in Pilot One than in Pilot Two. This indicated a possible lack of enthusiasm by Pilot One schools. Results also demonstrated when local vocational educators contacted employers they obtained a higher rate of response. When based on the universe slated for followup, however, the response rate was higher for state-level followup. There was little significant difference between the two pilots when compared for cost effectiveness. (Attachments include correspondence and survey instruments.) (YLB)

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FINAL REPORT

"A STUDY TO DESIGN AND IMPLEMENT EMPLOYER-BASED EVALUATION OF 1980 VOCATIONAL EDUCATION COMPLETERS AND LEAVERS"

by

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for

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ABSTRACT

In response to federal legislation requiring follow-up of vocational education students placed in jobs related to their field of training, The Bureau of Vocational Program Planning and Development (Connecticut) commissioned the present study. A set of procedures for complying with the federal mandate for an Employer Follow-Up was designed on the basis of existing literature and federal guidelines. Researchers pilot tested two methods of data collection and compared the same for rate-of-return reliability and cost-effectiveness. Results demonstrate that when local vocational educators contact employers they obtain a higher rate-of-response. However, when based on the universe slated for follow-up, the rate of former students on whom data is collected is higher when the follow-up is done at the State level. Results also raise several questions relative to the purposefulness of an Employer Follow-Up which suggests the need for further study. Both a low rate of participation by schools asked to participate, and a set of comments on the survey by participating and non-participating schools, suggests that local vocational educators view the survey as an imposition requiring time and effort that is not offset by the results achieved. Researchers conclude that if an Employer Follow-Up is to produce data that is both reliable as well as useful for program evaluation purposes there needs to be greater flexibility in the follow-up requirement.

PURPOSE. The impact of federallegislation on the conduct of vocational education programs has been cumulative since the passage of The Vocational Education Act of 1963. Accountability for program results has increased with each successive piece of legislation since, and including, the 1963 Act. The most recent Congressional action, The Education Amendments of 1976, represents a watershed of requirements for program evaluation and reporting of program data.

The purpose of the present study is to assist The Bureau of Vocational Program Planning and Development of the State of Connecticut in its efforts to comply with one component of the 1976 Law, namely, the collecting and reporting of data on former students who are currently employed in a field related to their training. Section 112(b) of P.L. 94-482 mandates that students who either complete or leave approved programs be followed up within one year of program separation. And that employers of those students who are reported to be "employed full-time or part-time in a field related to their training" be asked to rate the training each former student received.

Conducting an Employer Follow-Up presents vocational educators with a number of problems, namely, identifying employers, gaining former student's permission, obtaining employer cooperation, and avoiding the invasion of individual student privacy. In addition, an Employer Follow-Up Survey places increased manpower and "other cost" demands on vocational educators at both the State and local levels.

As mentioned above, the overall purpose of the present study is to assist the State of Connecticut, in light of the problems

noted, to comply with the requirement for an employer follow-up on former vocational education students. Specifically, the study is designed to accomplish the following objectives:

(1) Link procedures for an Employer Follow-Up with procedures for the similarly mandated Student Follow-Up (already in place)

(2) Design procedures for an Employer Follow-Up that would conform to guidelines laid down by the National Center for Educational Statistics, meet the State's need for data, and address the need for privacy of information in data collection procedures;

(3) Field test two methods of data collection, one to be local program based, the other to be local program and State agency based, and to compare the two for rate-of-return and cost-effectiveness;

(4) Design a data analysis program compatible with State data processing capability that will facilitate reporting of required data; and

(5) Draw conclusions based on all the above, and make recommendations to The Bureau of Vocational Program Planning and Development for compliance with the Employer Follow-Up mandate.

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE. The literature on assessment of employer satisfaction with and attitudes toward vocational education and/or its products was reviewed as a basis for the study. Search procedures included the use of the Career and Vocational Education information bank of ERIC, as well as bibliographies and monographs published

by The National Center for Research in Vocational Education.

Despite the importance attached to employer assessments in the recent legislation, relatively little activity is reported in the literature. O'Reilly and Asche (1979) conducted a national review of follow-up studies in vocational education and located 139 documents published between 1970 and 1977. Only twenty-nine of these were conducted with employers. For purposes of the present study, project researchers identified reports or abstracts of nineteen employer surveys which included all, or most, of the elements required by the recent federal mandate. These were surveys that requested information on particular former students rather than students as a group, and surveys that selected employers known to, or thought to, have employed former students rather than by random sampling. Four of the surveys reviewed were statewide surveys with the expressed intent of fulfilling VEDS requirements (Florida, Texas, New Hampshire, New York).

In all but two of the surveys employer response was collected by questionnaire. In two incidences, surveyors reported using structured interviews, but only with a highly selective sample of employers. All of the studies reported surveying a sample of either former students or employers, and in some cases, both. In all cases employers were identified by contacting former students. Granting of student permission to contact employers ranged from a low of 54% in one study to a high of 96% in another, a factor which could have important significance for the reliability of results.

The rate of employer returns ranged from a low of 37% in one survey to a high of 65% in another, with an average of 69%. Only four of the surveys reported a return rate the same as or better

than the rate suggested by VEDS guidelines (80%). There was a high correlation between rate of return and the use of stamped, return-addressed envelopes. All of the mailed surveys with response rates of 75% or better reported the use of prepaid return postage, while only one with a return rate below 50% reported such use. All of the surveys followed up on former students within one year of leaving vocational programs. One study reported following up at the end of one year and again at the end of two years with the interesting result of a higher rate of return after two years, and a slightly improved overall employer rating of former students' training. Of the four statewide studies reviewed, one reported using a state agency exclusively for data collection, while the other three reported data collection at the local program level.

PROCEDURES. The following procedures were employed to conduct the study.

Advisory Board. A panel of persons representative of the agencies directly or indirectly involved in an Employer Follow-Up was used as a "sounding board" for the study. With assistance from The Bureau of Vocational Program Planning and Development, an advisory board was formed representing State vocational education administrators, LEA and PSI vocational educators and employers. (Advisory Board members are listed in Attachment 1). The Advisory Board met at the outset of the study to review study objectives and help formulate study procedures, then, again, near the end of the study to review early returns and identify the need for additional information.

Employer Alert. Conforming to the practice found successful in other studies, a "general" alert notice was circulated among state employers. The general notice consisted of an open letter to employers mailed to the heads of each of the local Chambers of Commerce in the State. The letter requested that Chambers use local methods for communicating with employers to alert employers to the purpose of the survey and "respectfully" request their compliance. (See Attachment 2 for a copy of the letter). In addition, the purpose of an Employer Follow-Up and its significance for vocational education in Connecticut, was explained to the Director of the Connecticut Business and Industry Association and the request made that employers be alerted through CBIA communication channels.

Student Follow-Up Procedures. Procedures for a Student Follow-Up, also mandated by P.L. 94-482, were already in place when this study was initiated. Researchers reviewed procedures for the Student Follow-Up to determine the linkages which would need to be made with the Employer Follow-Up. As part of the Student Follow-Up, the State began collecting names and addresses of employers of former students approximately six years prior to this Study. Data elements not collected in the Student Follow-Up needed for completion of The Employer Follow-Up Report included the race/ethnic status of program completers and leavers, and the permission of former students "employed in a field related to training" to contact their employers. The Completer/Leaver Worksheet, a data collection instrument used in the Student Follow-Up, was revised to reflect these additional data elements. (A copy of the revised Completer/Leaver Worksheet can be found in Attachment 3). In addition,

The Bureau of Vocational Program Planning and Development designed a Student Survey Form for "suggested" use in the collection of Student Follow-Up data.

(Note: Procedures for the Student Follow-Up do not include provision for obtaining the "written" permission of former students to contact employers. While the U.S. Attorney General's office has not ruled on the necessity of written permission, guidelines published by The National Center for Educational Statistics urge schools to initiate the practice. It is suggested that permission be obtained prior to the completion of training. Another method would be to provide a place for the student's signature on the Student Follow-Up Survey form designed by the State.)

Pilot Test Procedures. One set of procedures was designed for the Employer Follow-Up. The project design called for pilot testing the same set of procedures in each of two ways. In Pilot Test One, LEA's and PSI's were asked to follow all procedures and submit results (Employer Follow-Up Survey returns) to the State for data analysis. In Pilot Test Two, LEA's and PSI's were asked to collect the data elements necessary for implementation of the Employer Follow-Up (the Completer/Leaver Worksheet) and submit to the State Bureau of Vocational Program Planning and Development along with Student Follow-Up reports. The Bureau then followed procedures beginning with a mailing to employers of former students employed "in a field related to training", who had granted permission to contact their employers.

(Note: In the case of the present study procedures for contacting employers were completed by DataGuide acting in behalf of the Bureau. All correspondence with employers was conducted on State letterhead over the signature of the Assoicate Commissioner of Vocational Education, and employers were asked to return surveys to Bureau offices.)

The purpose of two pilots was to compare two methods of data collection for rate-of-return and cost-effectiveness.

Sampling Plan. The plan used to obtain sample groups for each of the two pilots was based on guidelines established by The National Center for Educational Statistics. All LEA's, Vocational/Technical Schools, and PSI's with approved vocational education programs were partitioned into five groups with an equivalent number of each of the three types of program sponsors (LEA's, Vocational/Technical Schools, and PSI's) in each group. The total number of enrollments in each group was roughly equivalent (based on 1979 reporting). Furthermore, each of the five groups reflected the urban/suburban mix of communities in the State. Two of the five equivalent groups were arbitrarily selected for participation in the pilot tests (See Attachment 4).

Timelines. A complete set of instructions for completing both the Student Follow-Up and the Employer Follow-Up was mailed to all schools in both pilots on January 9. Schools in Pilot One were requested to complete Student Follow-Up procedures and return data by March 6, and to complete procedures for the Employer Follow-Up and return data (Employer Follow-Up Survey Forms) by April 10. Schools in Pilot Two were requested to complete procedures for the Student Follow-Up and send reports, including Completer/Leaver Worksheet, to the State by March 6. DataGuide then instituted the Employer Follow-Up of students in schools from Pilot Two during the same timeframe in which schools in Pilot One were following the same set of procedures.

Employer Contact Methods. Schools in Pilot One were supplied with a set of three sample employer contact letters and Employer Follow-Up

Survey forms (See Attachment 5). They were asked to send an initial contact letter (on school letterhead) and an Employer Follow-Up form along with a return addressed, stamped envelope to the employer of each student reported from the Student Follow-Up to be employed full-time or part-time in a field related to training, and from whom permission had been obtained to contact his/her employer. Schools were asked to wait two weeks from the date of mailing the initial request and then to send a second letter, again with an Employer Follow-Up Survey form and a return addressed, stamped envelope, to employers who did not respond to the first contact. Schools were given the option of using a telephone contact at this stage rather than (or, in conjunction with) the second letter. If a response was not obtained after the second contact, schools were asked to send a third and final letter, again, with a form and a stamped return envelope.

Tally Sheet. Participants in Pilot One were asked to maintain a tally sheet noting each incidence of employer contact, the date and whether a response was obtained (See Attachment 6). Tally Sheets were then mailed along with Employer Follow-Up Survey returns. DataGuide maintained identical tally sheet records of all employer follow-up contacts made for completer/leavers of programs in Pilot Two.

Employer Follow-Up Code. The Employer Follow-Up Code was designed to transfer all of the data elements needed for reporting Employer Follow-Up data to a single form. The Code consists of the following data: School, program, program level, gender of

former student, and completer/leaver status of former student. Combined with Employer ratings, this grouping of data represents all the data requested under VEDS reporting guidelines. Pilot participants were instructed to extract data for code construction from Completer/Leaver Worksheets and enter the Code at the top of Employer Follow-Up Survey forms before distributing to employers. (See Attachment 5 for instructions on Employer Follow-Up Code).

Privacy of Information. Schools in Pilot One were instructed to "block out" the names of the former students entered on forms sent to employers, before forwarding forms to the State. In this way, student names do not appear in State files of data collected for the Employer Follow-Up. Researchers were not able to design a similar method for protecting individual student identity in Pilot Two. Since the former student's name is essential in the employer contact, and since Pilot Two procedures called for the employer contact to be made by the State, it was essential for local program directors to forward student names to the State.

Field Test of Procedures with Employers. A random sample of twenty-five employers in the Norwalk Labor Market Area was sent a blank Employer Follow-Up Survey form and asked to respond to a series of questions based on employer contact methods. Twenty of the twenty-five responded. When asked if, given the assurance that all information collected was confidential and that the employee in question had given his/her permission, the employer would return the form all twenty responded "yes". When asked, "to whom should the form be addressed", respondents answered "General Manager", "President", or "Director of Personnel". When these answers were

RESULTS. The Tables below highlight the results obtained from Pilot One, Pilot Two, and a Survey of Pilot One Participants conducted after Pilot One returns were in.

TABLE I

Aggregation of Data from Pilot One Tally Sheets

Number of Schools in Pilot Sample	32	
Number of Schools Reporting Data	14	
Number of Former Students Employed FT or PT in Field Related to Training	683*	
Number of First Employer Contacts Reported	380	
Number of Second Employer Contacts Reported	29	
Number of Telephone Contacts Reported	7	
Number of Third Employer Contacts Reported	3	
TOTAL NUMBER OF EMPLOYER RESPONSES IN-HAND	345	
RATE-OF-RETURN BASED ON NUMBER OF FIRST EMPLOYER CONTACTS	90.7	(percent)
RATE-OF-RETURN BASED ON NUMBER OF FORMER STUDENTS EMPLOYED	50.5	(percent)

*Taken from Completer/Leaver Follow-Up Reports of Schools Reporting Data

TABLE II

Aggregation of Data from Pilot Two Tally Sheets

Number of Schools in Pilot	32	
Number of Schools Reporting Data	20*	
Number of Students Employed FT or PT in Field Related to Training	591**	
Number of Former Students Granting Permission to Contact Employer	476**	
Number of First Employer Contacts	476	
Number of Second Employer Contacts	275	
Number of Telephone Contacts	-0-	
Number of Third Employer Contacts	-0-	
TOTAL NUMBER OF RESPONSES IN-HAND	356	
RATE-OF-RETURN BASED ON NUMBER OF FIRST EMPLOYER CONTACTS	77.1	(percent)
RATE-OF-RETURN BASED ON NUMBER OF FORMER STUDENTS EMPLOYED	60.2	(percent)

*Nine additional schools returned data too late for inclusion in employer mailings

**Taken from Completer/Leaver Worksheets of Schools Reporting Data

TABLE III

Post-Pilot Survey of Pilot One Participants

Number of Schools in Survey	32	
Number of Schools Responding	25*	
Method of Contacting Employers	2	By Mail (exclusively)
	4	By Hand (exclusively)
	-0-	By Telephone (exclusively)
	8	Combination of all Three Methods
	11	Did not contact employers
Number of Manhours Committed to Employer Follow-Up	55 min. (av. per student)**	
Dollar Amount Spent on Postage and/or Mileage	$27.57	(average per school)
Reasons Given for Not Participating	1	"no former student employed in field related to training"
	1	"former students did not give permission"
	1	"do our own follow-up"
	1	"too much paperwork"
	2	"staff time not available"
	2	"timelines too short"
	3	"no reasons given"
Comments on Employer Follow-Up By Participating Schools	"Former students are reluctant to give out information on employment status"	
	"The survey is an invasion of former student's privacy"	

"We have too much paperwork already without this."

"Survey results didn't tell us anything we didn't already know about former students"

"Survey is too soon after graduation"

"The timeline between Student Follow-Up and Employer Follow-Up is too short. We need more time to follow up on former students"

"Results are not reliable"

"Program leavers are difficult to identify at the community college level"

*A questionnaire was mailed to all 32 schools in the Pilot One sample. Responses were received from 14. Additional responses were gleaned from telephone surveys of schools who did not respond to the mailed questionnaire.

**This figure was obtained by dividing the total number of manhours reported by participating schools by the number of former students followed-up in Pilot One. It inclusdes the time spent collecting data in the Student Follow-Up which was used for the Employer Follow-Up. i.e., names and addresses of employers and permission of former students.

compared to the relative size of the companies responding, results showed that larger companies (with employees of fifty or more) tended to respond "Director of Personnel", while smaller companies responded "Manager" or "President". When asked how much time would be required to fill out and return the form responses ranged from "one day" to "two weeks". And when asked for a recommendation of specific changes in the form only one employer responded by suggesting the wording be changed from "training the employees received" to "training the employee received in school". (This change was incorporated in the final version of the survey form used in the study). All twenty respondents answered "no" when asked if it would be "more convenient (for them) if the Survey was conducted by telephone rather than by mail".

Workshops for Pilot Participants. A workshop for all participants, in both the Student Follow-Up and the Employer Follow-Up Pilots was conducted by the State Bureau of Vocational Program Planning and Development in January, 1981. DataGuide representatives were present to provide assistance and instructions to Pilot school participants. Of the 64 schools asked to participate in one of the two pilots only nine were represented at the January workshop (3 Pilot One participants and 6 Pilot Two participants). In light of the small turnout for the January workshop, DataGuide announced a second workshop in early February, this time for Pilot Schools only. Thirteen Pilot Schools representatives attended the second workshop (8 Pilot One schools and 5 Pilot Two schools). Attendees at the second workshop were unanimous in their complaints about the time, effort,

and or costs involved in conducting the Employer Follow-Up. One attendee said that his school would not, under any circumstances, participate. Three attendees said they could see no useful purpose, other than compliance with a Federal mandate, in collecting the data requested by the Employer Follow-Up. All said, in their opinion, collecting the data (names of former student employers, permission of former students, and employer ratings) would be extremely difficult.

Computer Program Design. Another activity of this project was to design, develop, and pilot test a computer system that would provide breakdown analyses of the information collected through the Employer Follow-Up evaluation. In order to accomplish this task, the project staff first had to design the Employer Follow-Up Survey to include a follow-up code that would allow the computer program to analyze the data by town, school, program, gender, race, termination status, and level of program. In addition, this form was designed to facilitate the easy translation of the coded information on the form into either keypunched cards or direct data entry.

The computer program was designed to provide the state with summary statistics on how well the employees were rated. Working closely with the state, the computer program was written to aggregate the data the follow ways:

-- through breakdown analysis of program by level
-- through breakdown analysis of race by sex
-- through breakdown analysis of completion status by level
-- through crosstabs of program by level
-- through crosstabs of program by level by town

The data collected this year was analyzed by the computer program and the results were submitted under a separate cover.

CONCLUSIONS. Researchers draw the following conclusions based on the foregoing results. In some cases, conclusions are tentative, in others they merely raise questions which call for further study.

Participation Rate. The low participation rate by Pilot One schools (14 of 32 schools) is significant when compared to the participation by 20 of 32 schools in Pilot Two. (Nine additional Pilot Two schools participated although "too late" to be included in pilot results). The low rate of participation by Pilot One schools, is, in all probability, a reflection of importance attached to, an Employer Follow-Up by LEA vocational educators. Comments made at workshops with Pilot Schools and documented in the Post-Pilot Survey of Pilot One schools support this conclusion. More than half commented on the additional workload imposed by the survey, and several questioned both the "usefulness" and the "reliability" of the results obtained. One respondent indicated that employer ratings of graduates less than one year after graduation did not tell vocational educators anything they didn't already know about former students at the time they graduated. Another respondent answered that his/her school routinely conducted their own follow-up and therefore considered the State directed follow-up a duplication of effort. In light of low participation rates and repeated comments, it is reasonable to conclude that local vocational educators question the value of an Employer Follow-Up and could not be counted on to participate, to any significant extent, if the Survey

was voluntary.

Numbers Followed-Up. There is wide discrepancy, between the two pilots, in the total number of former students "slated" for follow-up and the actual number of follow-ups done. Six hundred and eighty-three former students of Pilot One programs were reported to be "employed FT or PT in a field related to training". From this number, only 380 employer contacts were made. By contrast, 476 former students out of a universe of 591 were followed in Pilot Two. The number of students followed in Pilot Two is the number of students in that sample who gave permission to contact employers. The number of former students who granted permission in the Pilot One sample. Since Pilot One schools were requested to follow-up all students who gave permission the availabe statistics would imply that only 380 of the 683 students in the sample gave permission. However, in scientifically balanced samples, one would anticipate the proportion of permissions granted to be nearly identical in both samples. The discrepancy between the two samples could be explained by the fact that schools in Pilot One were less enthusiastic about obtaining student permission. Considering the fact that Pilot One schools were being asked to complete follow-up procedures themselves, and taking into consideration the comments discussed above, there is strong evidence for this explanation.

A second explanation is that Pilot One schools did not follow-up on all those from whom permission was obtained. This conclusion also could be supported by attitudes toward doing the follow-up, as well as the possible reality of inadequate staff time to complete all follow-ups.

Whichever explanation applies, the discrepancy between the universe to be followed and the actual numbers followed-up does have a bearing on the reliability of statistical results. If only slightly more than half the completer/leavers in Pilot One granted permission to contact their employers the results are biased by the highly self-selective nature of the sample on which any conclusions might be drawn. If, on the other hand, surveyors arbitrarily selected students for follow-up from a larger number who had granted permission, conclusions based on an arbitraily selected sample would likewise be open to question.

Rate-of-Return. When based on the number of employer contacts made the rate-of-return for Pilot One is significantly higher than Pilot Two. Furthermore, the higher rate-of-return was achieved with fewer employee contacts. (A 90.7 rate-of-return was achieved from 380 first contacts and only 20 second contacts in Pilot One, compared to a 77.1 rate-of-return from 476 first contacts and 275 second contacts in Pilot Two.) There is a higher probable correlation between the higher rate-of-return in Pilot One and the method of employer contact in Pilot One. When asked which method was used for contacting employers only two of the 14 participating schools in Pilot One said "by mail exclusively". The majority reported using a combination of mail and hand delivery, with more of the latter than the former. Many indicated that survey forms were delivered in the course of making "site visits", e.g., observations of current students placed in Cooperative Work Experiences. Hand delivery (and, in some cases,

pick up) of survey forms coupled with the existing personal link between employers and vocational educators at the local level is a probable explanation for a higher rate-of-return from the locally-based Employer Follow-Up than in the follow-up conducted at the State level.

When based on the universe of students to be followed-up, however, there is little difference in rates-of-return is reversed (50.5% in Pilot One compared to 60.2% in Pilot Two). The difference in rates-of-return makes it difficult for researchers to draw meaningful conclusions. Results support the notion that when local vocational educators contact employers they will get a higher rate of response. However, when balanced against the reliability of results achieved by local educators, the value of a higher rate-of-return is questionable.

Cost-Effectiveness. Pilot One participating schools reported spending an average of $27.57 per school for postage and/or mileage, and an average of 55 person minutes per student to conduct the Employer Follow-Up. (These figures include time spent collecting data in the Student Follow-Up which was also used in the Employer Follow-Up). By comparison, researchers spent an average of $19.00 per school on postage and an estimated 40 person mintues per student contacting employers and tabulating results. (This figure does not include time spent collecting employer data and student permission). With the exception of the difference in costs ($19.00 vs. $27.57) which is attributable to the greater use of hand delivery than mailing in Pilot One, there is little significant difference between the two pilots when compared

for cost-effectiveness. If researchers included the number of person hours spent collecting employer and permission data in Pilot Two, the two figures (costs and manhours) would balance between the two Pilots.

Usefulness of Collected Data. While it was not an objective of the present study, the question "Why is this survey necessary?" was raised frequently enough to influence conclusions drawn by the Study. Skinkle and Foecke (AEDS Journal, Fall 80) make the point that all "data collection should significantly aid decision-making and policy formulation at the local level rather than simply provide data for... accounting and reporting purposes." In the same article the authors emphasize that recent federal mandates for uniform data collection could result in a "compliance mentality", rather than contribute to decisions at the local level.

A rationale for collecting Employer Follow-Up data at the local level was that, in this way, local program directors would have access to, and could use for their own purposes, the data collected. While researchers agree with this rationale, the question whether the type of data collected under VEDS guidelines is useful for local purposes, is one that should be raised. The answers are not to be found in the present study but some assumptions can be made. The overwhelming attitude expressed by participants in this study agrees with the "compliance mentality" cited by Skinkle and Foecke. None of the respondents to the Post-Pilot Survey commented on the usefulness of the data collected. And, as has already been cited, one respondent commented that the survey yielded no new information.

In light of the resistance to doing the Employer Follow-Up and the attitudes toward an Employer Follow-Up, by Pilot One schools, researchers conclude that the data collected is at least not considered useful by local educators. Furthermore, the lack of enthusiasm for obtaining student permission and/or following up on all students, makes the validity of results obtained from a locally based Employer Follow-Up highly questionable.

In the opinion of the principal investigators, if Employer ratings of former students are necessary measures of program effectiveness, then any survey of employers should allow for more flexibility in design at the local level. Local educators should be able to determine the kinds of employer data that would be most useful for evaluation and program modification. As it stands, Employer Follow-Up data appear to answer few important questions for local educators, and their vailidty for conclusion at other governmental levels is questionable.

An Employer Follow-Up Survey designed to meet locally determined needs for program evaluation and simultaneously meet federal data needs for accountability purposes would make more sense and, in all probability, meet with more cooperation among local vocational educators. Researchers are not prepared to suggest optional designs at this time but would highly recommend a response of this kind to the current federal mandate.

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Attachment 1

EMPLOYER FOLLOW-UP SURVEY ADVISORY BOARD

Mr. Fred Wheeler, Director of Vocational Education
Watertown Public School District

Mr. Charles Salerno, Consultant
Division of Vocational Technical Schools
State Department of Education

Mr. Richard Nicholas, Counselor
Norwich Regional Vocational Technical School

Dr. Alexander Paddyfoote, Superintendent
Cromwell School District

Mr. Kenneth Edlridge
Board of Higher Education
State of Connecticut

Mr. R. Somerday, Training Director
Pratt and Whitney Aircraft, Inc.

Ms. Ruth Aceto, Office of Personnel
Aetna Life and Casualty, Inc.

Mr. Frank Livak, Forms Manager
Bureau of Research, Planning, and Evaluation
State Department of Education

Ms. Susan Stango
Bureau of Vocational Program Planning and Development
State Department of Education

Ms. Judy Slowik
Bureau of Vocational Program Planning and Development
State Department of Education

Attachment 2

DataGuide, Inc.

268-1069

242 Fan Hill Road, Monroe, CT. 06468

January 9, 1981

Dear Connecticut Employer:

In the next several weeks some of you will be hearing from vocational educators throughout the State. We are writing to alert you to their correspondence and to encourage your cooperation.

The State Department of Education is conducting an evaluation of State sponsored vocational training programs. A part of that evaluation is to measure how well State training programs are meeting your needs. Specifically, the evaluation is designed to discover whether State training program completers are adequately trained to fill the jobs for which you hire them.

Results of the evaluation will be used to improve training programs where the results indicate there is a need to do so. By so doing the State hopes to provide you with better trained employees.

If you are currently hiring a State program completor in a job related to his/her training, you will be asked to rate the training the former student received while still in school. The Survey form is easy to complete and should be filled out by the employees' immediate supervisor. We hope you will see the benefit of cooperating with the Survey and return forms as speedily as possible.

DataGuide is assisting the State to conduct this evaluation. If you have any questions about it we will be happy to answer them.

Sincerely,

Thomas B. Stribling
Project Director

Attachment 3

COMPLETER/LEAVER FOLLOW-UP VERIFICATION WORKSHEET
Form ED 404C Rev. 12/80

INSTRUCTIONS

1. *Read detailed instructions and definitions on the back of this form.*
2. *Use worksheet to record Completer/Leaver information as of February 15, 1981.*
3. *Keep this form in your files.* **Do Not** *send copies to the State Department of Education.*

Town and School Name:	School Code	Proposal No.	USOE Program Code	USOE Program Title:

Reported By: (Name, Title, and Telephone No.)

Level of Program (Check one): ☐ Secondary ☐ Post Secondary ☐ Adult Long Term

I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII	VIII	IX
Student Name	Sex (M/F)	Racial/ Ethnic Group	Placement Status	Hourly Wage	Specific Job Title	Name, Adderss and Tel. No. of Employer and Immediate Supervisor	Completer (C) or Leaver (L)	Permission to Contact Employer (Y/N)

35

36

III Racial Ethnic Group
1-Native American Indian/Alaskan
2-Asian American/Pacific Islander
3-Black not Hispanic
4-White not Hispanic
5-Hispanic

IV Placement Status
F-Pursuing Additional Education
G-Status Unknown
H-Not in Labor Force and not pursuing Additional Education
L-Employed Full-Time in Field Related to Training
M-Employed Part-Time in Field Related to Training
N-Employed Full-Time in Field Not Related to Training
O-Employed Part-Time in Field Not Related to Training
P-Unemployed, Seeking Employment
R-Armed Service

Attachment 4

Pilot One Schools

1. Berlin
2. Bristol
3. Danbury
4. East Hartford
5. Enfield
6. Hamden
7. Middletown
8. Naugatuck
9. New Fairfield
10. New Milford
11. Plainville
12. Rocky Hill
13. Southington
14. Stratford
15. Torrington
16. Waterford
17. Waterbury
18. Wethersfield
19. Windham
20. Regional District #6
21. Regional District #11
22. Hamden/New Haven Cooperative Education Center
23. Oak Hill School
24. Northwestern Community College
25. Mattatuck Community College
26. Asnuntuck Community College
27. Greater New Haven State Technical College
28. LARC
29. Oliver Wolcott Regional Vocational Technical School
30. Vinal Regional Vocational Technical School
31. Eli Whitney Regional Vocational Technical School
32. Norwich Free Academy

Pilot Two Schools

1. Bloomfield
2. Brookfield
3. Cheshire
4. Derby
5. East Hampton
6. Glastonbury
7. Griswold
8. Killingly
9. Manchester
10. Milford
11. New Britain
12. Newtown
13. Norwalk
14. Plymouth
15. Seymour
16. South Windsor
17. Suffield
18. Trumbull
19. Watertown
20. West Haven
21. Wolcott
22. Regional District #7
23. Regional District #12
24. Regional District #18
25. Manchester Community College
26. Housatonic Community College
27. New London/Mohegan Community College
28. Thames Valley Technical School
29. FAVAHR
30. Platt Regional Vocational Technical School
31. W.F. Kaynor Regional Vocational Technical School
32. H.C. Wilcox Regional Vocational Technical School

Attachment 5

INSTRUCTIONS AND PROCEDURES FOR CONDUCTING THE EMPLOYER FOLLOW-UP PILOT SURVEY

Step 1. Information from the 1979-80 Vocational Education Student Follow-Up Survey (SF-1)

As in previous years each vocational education program completer and leaver should be surveyed as part of the Completer/Leaver Follow-Up. Data obtained from this survey is then to be used to initiate the employer follow-up pilot survey.

Included in this year's Completer/Leaver Follow-Up Report package is a sample Vocational Education Student Follow-Up Questionnaire Form SF-1, which is recommended for use in surveying former vocational students. If this sample questionnaire is used as part of the student follow-up survey the information necessary to conduct the Employer Follow-Up Pilot survey will be obtained on this form. If a school should choose not to use the recommended sample questionnaire the required information should be obtained from another source. The elements of information required to conduct the Employer Follow-Up Pilot Survey must then be entered on the Verification Worksheet Form ED 404C:

Student Name
Gender
Racial/Ethnic Group
Placement Status
Hourly Wage
Specific Job Title
Name, address and telephone number of Employer and Immediate Supervisor
Permission to Contact Employer

It is essential that the former vocational students give their permission to contact their employers. If a student has refused permission to contact their employer this should be noted in Column IX on the Verification Worksheet and no contact should be made with the employer. An Employer Follow-Up Form, EF-1 should not be sent to the employer of any student who has not granted their permission to do so.

Step 2. Determining Which Employers To Contact

The Employer Follow-Up Survey Form, EF-1 should be sent to employers of former vocational education students, who:

1. Responded on the completer/leaver follow-up form SF-1, that they are currently employed full or part-time in a field which is related to their vocational training (status categories L& H), and;

2. Granted permission on the completer/leaver follow-up form, SF-1 to contact their employer, and;

3. Responded on the completer/leaver follow-up form SF-1, that they are not self-employed.

Step 3. Coding the Employer Follow-Up Form, EF-1

The Employer Follow-Up Code. Across the top of the Employer Follow-Up Survey form are sixteen empty boxes. These are to be filled in before mailing the form to the employer. The Follow-Up Code will aid in breaking out results into the categories required by VEDS reporting procedures. The Follow-Up Code is not a student identifying number, and will not be used to evaluate the training provided by any one school or program. Use the guide below to fill in the follow-up code:

Boxes 1-6	School Code
Boxes 7-12	U.S.O.E Program Code
Box 13	Gender of the completer/leaver Enter "M" for "Male", and "F" for "Female".
Box 14	Racial/Ethnic Group to which the former Student belongs. Enter 1 for American Indian Native Alaskan 2 for Asian American, Pacific Islander 3 for Black not Hispanic 4 for White not Hispanic 5 for Hispanic (See back of Completer/Leaver Verification Worksheet for definitions.)
Box 15	Termination status. Enter "C" for "Completer" "L" for "Leaver"
Box 16	Level of program student attended. Enter 1 for Secondary 2 for Postsecondary 3 for Adult Long Term

Step 4. Conducting the Employer Follow-Up Survey

A copy of the Employer Follow-Up Form EF-1 was sent to twenty five Connecticut employers for their reaction. All of the employers responded that if sent the form they would fill it out and return it within a reasonable period of time. However, a review of Employer Follow-Up

Surveys in other states indicates that some employers may need as many as two reminder letters before returning the form. Therefore, to assist you in conducting the survey, we have enclosed three sample letters (an initial, a first follow-up and a second follow-up request) to be typed on school letterhead and mailed along with the Employer Follow-Up Form EF-1. The review of procedures in other states also indicated that enclosing a self-addressed stamped envelope increases the rate of response.

The Connecticut employers who responded to the survey also indicated that the mailing should be addressed to the General Manager (in the case of small firms) or the Personnel Officer (in the case of large firms). If you do not know the relative size of the firm, you should direct the survey to the "President" or "General Manager" of the firm. In any case, the letter should always request that the actual, Employer Follow-Up survey be completed by the former students immediate supervisor.

The Connecticut employers responding to the survey indicated that a telephone survey "would not be more convenient (for them) than a mailed survey", however, some employers may be more willing to provide the requested information over the telephone. We are suggesting the option of a telephone call to employers who do not respond after the second request. If an employer is not willing to provide responses over the telephone, you should remind him/her of the importance of the survey and indicate that you will send another request.

Step 5. Tally Sheet

A very important part of the Employer Follow-Up Pilot Study is the evaluation of the procedures and techniques used to collect the follow-up data. As a part of this evaluation, the DataGuide research firm under contract with the Connecticut State Department of Education will analyze the response rate of employers, as indicated on the Tally Sheet, EF-2.

Each completer or leaver's name, code, and employer's name and address should be entered on the Tally Sheet at the time of the initial mailing of the Employer Follow-Up Survey Form. The date of the first and any subsequent mailings should be entered in the appropriate columns. Be sure to indicate if a telephone inquiry was made, and in the final column indicate whether a response is received. Please mail the completed Tally Sheets by April 10, 1981 to :

DataGuide, Inc.
242 Fan Hill Road
Monroe, Connecticut 06468

Please Note: The Tally Sheet is vital to the results of the pilot study. Your cooperation is important!

Step 6. Returning Employer Follow-Up Survey Forms

When Employer Follow-Up Forms, EF-1 have been received and noted on the Tally Sheet EF-2, the former students name should be blocked out on the Employer Follow-Up Survey Form and the forms should be mailed to:

Susan P. Stango
Bureau of Vocational Program
Planning and Development
Division of Vocational and
Adult Education
P.O. Box 2219
Hartford, CT 06115

All Employer Follow-Up Survey forms should be returned no later than April 10, 1981.

Below is a summary of steps we suggest you follow when conducting the Employer Follow-Up Survey:

Steps 1,2&3	Obtain information concerning the former student's employer from the Vocational Education Student Follow-Up Form SF-1. Enter this information and the Employer Follow-Up Code on the Employer Follow-Up Form, EF-1. If the completer/leaver has responded that he/she is employed in a field related to training and has given permission to contact his/her employer, mail the initial letter and Employer Follow-Up Form.
	- Wait two weeks -
Step 4	If the employer has not responded, send the first follow-up letter and another copy of the Employer Follow-Up Form.
	- Wait one week -
Optional	Telephone the employer and request information be given over the phone or that form be mailed as soon as possible.
	- And/Or -
	Send the second follow-up request and additional copy of Employer Follow-Up Form.
Steps 5&6	Block out student names on the Employer Follow-Up Forms, EF-1 and return the forms to the Connecticut State Department of Education. Return the Tally Sheets to DataGuide, Inc.

Attachment 6

SAMPLE LETTER/INITIAL REQUEST

Dear Employer:

We are presently conducting a follow-up study of students who were enrolled in our vocational education program. The purpose of this study is to gather information which we can use to improve the quality of our vocational education programs. Hopefully, this will also allow us to provide local employers with better prepared vocational program graduates and employees.

As an employer of a former vocational student, _____(name of student)_____, we are asking for your help in this effort. Please have this employee's immediate job supervisor complete the enclosed form and return it by March 20, 1981. The identity of you or your employee will not be revealed in the tabulation and final reporting of this information.

It is only with the assistance of employers like yourself that we can continue to improve our vocational education programs. If you have any questions concerning the form or the study, please do not hesitate to call or write me. Thank you for your cooperation.

We have included a return addressed, stamped envelope for your convenience.

Sincerely,

John Doe, Vocational Director
Any School
Any Town, Connecticut

SAMPLE LETTER/SECOND REQUEST

Dear Employer:

We are asking you, as an employer of a previous vocational education student, _____(name of student)_____, for your assistance. We are presently conducting a follow-up study of students who were enrolled in our vocational education program. The purpose of this study is to gather information which we can use to improve the quality of our vocational education programs. Hopefully, this will also allow us to provide local employers with better prepared vocational program graduates and employees.

Recently, we sent a questionnaire to you. If you have already completed and returned the form, thank you for your assistance.

If you have not filled out the form, please take the time now to do so. In case you have misplaced the original form, we are enclosing another. We are also including a return-addressed, stamped envelope for your convenience.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

John Doe, Vocational Director
Any School
Any Town, Connecticut

SAMPLE LETTER/THIRD REQUEST

Dear Employer:

We have still not heard from you in response to the Employer Follow-Up Survey we sent you several weeks ago. Your response is important in our efforts to evaluate vocational training programs, and hopefully, to provide you with better trained employees.

If you wish, you may call me with your response by telephoning _____ any day between _____ and _____. Otherwise, please return the form in the enclosed return addressed envelope. Thank you for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

John Doe, Vocational Director
Any School
Any Town, Connecticut

Attachment 7

FORM EF-1
Follow-up Code

CONFIDENTIAL

1	2	3	4	5	6		7	8	9	10	11	12		13		14		15		16

STATE OF CONNECTICUT
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Employer Follow-up Survey

Employee's Name_____

Dear Employer: Please provide information regarding the above named employee. He/she is a former student of a vocational training program sponsored by the State of Connecticut. *This survey is part of an effort to evaluate the vocational training this individual received while he/she was a student.* It will in no way affect the employee. Neither you, the individual named, nor your organization will be named in the final report of this study.

1. Is the person named above currently (or was he/she recently) employed by your firm? (17)

☐ 1 yes ☐ 2 no If **no**, please return the form. If **yes**, please continue.

Please answer the following questions by comparing the employee's performance to the performance of others who perform the same type of work.

2. VOCATIONAL TRAINING EVALUATION

Please rate the vocational training the individual received in school in the following areas:

	Very Poor	Poor	Average	Good	Very Good	
a. Technical knowledge	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5	(18)
b. Work attitude	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5	(19)
c. Work quality	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5	(20)

3. OVERALL RATING

What is your overall rating of the vocational training received by this individual as it relates to the requirements of his or her job?

☐ 1 Very Poor ☐ 2 Poor ☐ 3 Average ☐ 4 Good ☐ 5 Very Good (21)

4. RELATIVE PREPARATION

As a result of this person's vocational training, how would you rate his or her preparation in relation to other employees in his or her work group who **did not** receive such training?

☐ 0 No basis for comparison ☐ 3 Both are about the same (22)

☐ 1 Individual is less prepared ☐ 4 Individual is better prepared

Title of person filling out this form _____

Name of firm _____

* * * THANK YOU FOR YOUR COOPERATION * * *

Attachment 8

EMPLOYER FOLLOW-UP TALLY SHEET

School:	PROGRAM	PROPOSAL NUMBER

Stuent's Name/Follow-Up Code	Employer Name, Address and Telephone Number	Date of First Request	Date of Second Request	Ele. Option Yes or No)	Date of Third Request	Response Rec'd. Yes or No)

Mail completed Tally Sheets to DATAGUIDE, Inc. *BY APRIL 10, 1981.*
242 Fan Hill Road
Monroe, Connecticut 06468

Attachment 9

DataGuide, Inc.

268-1069

242 Fan Hill Road, Monroe, CT. 06468

Dear Employer:

We are helping the State of Connecticut develop a system for evaluating State sponsored vocational training programs. A part of the system calls for asking employers of former students to rate the vocational training those students received. We are considering using the enclosed "Employer Survey" for that purpose. Would you be kind enough to take a few minutes now to look at the enclosed form and answer the question at the bottom of this page, then return to us in the enclosed self-addressed envelope? Your answers will help us develop a system that is efficient and the least time consuming for you.

We will appreciate your cooperation.

Sincerely,

Tom Stribling
Project Director

---

1. Given the assurance that your response would be confidential., and that the employee on whom the information is requested had given his/her permission to contact you, would you be willing to complete the form and return in a reasonable period of time? ____ Yes ____ No

2. Who, in your firm, should receive this form (e.g., Director of Personnel, Supervisor of Training, etc)? _____
_____

3. About how much time would you need to complete this form on one employee and return it? _____

4. Do you have specific suggestions for how the form could be improved?
_____
_____
_____
_____

5. Would it be more convenient for you if the same survey were conducted by telephone rather than by mail? _____ Yes _____ No

Thank you for your cooperation!

Attachment 10

DATAGUIDE, INC.
5/5/81

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR
SCHOOLS WHO COMPLETED PROCEDURES
FOR THE EMPLOYER FOLLOW-UP SURVEY

(Pilot 1)

1. How did you collect information on former students?

   Students Follow-Up Questionnaire (Form SF-1) ____
   By Telephone ____
   From school files ____
   Other (specify) _____
   _____

2. From approximately what percentage of former students were you able to obtain names and addresses of current employers, and permission to contact employers?

   less than 25% _____
   25% to 50% _____
   50% to 75% _____
   over 75% _____

3. How did you collect information from employers of former students?

   By mail ____ By telephone ____
   Other (specify) _____
   _____

4. Did you use the sample letters to employers which were included with your information packet?

   Yes _____ No _____

5. Did you include a stamped, self addressed envelope in your mailing to employers?

   Yes _____ No _____

6. Approximately how much money in postage was required to complete the Employer Follow-Up Survey?

   _____

7. How many staff persons were included in completing the Employer Follow-Up Survey on former students from your school?

   _____

8. What specific suggestions do you have for how the Employer Follow-Up Survey might be handled differently?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Name of person filling out this form

_____

School

_____

RECEIVED
DIV. OF VOCATIONAL EDUCATION
OCT 7 1981
BUREAU OF VOCATIONAL PROGRAMS
PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT